

**Testimony of Maureen Smith, Director of Consumer Relations, Office of The  
Healthcare Advocate**

**Before the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee In  
Support of the Reconfirmation of Kevin P. Lembo, State Healthcare Advocate**

**March 12, 2009**

Good afternoon Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, Senator McKinney, Representative Piscopo and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I am Maureen Smith, and I'm the Director of Consumer Relations at The Office Of The Healthcare Advocate. I have the privilege of leading an outstanding, albeit small, team of Case Managers in attaining positive resolutions to consumer issues with managed care organizations.

I am here today to offer testimony for the re-appointment of Kevin Lembo as Connecticut's Health Care Advocate. Many, if not most of you, are already aware of the many contributions Kevin has made in health care policy efforts. Additionally, you are aware of the endeavors he has undertaken in bringing to the public's attention issues in the design and delivery of quality health care services to Connecticut's residents. This has not always been easy work. But Kevin is a person of commitment and integrity. He does not shy away from adversity. Nor does he seek attention for his own self aggrandizement. He thinks about the good of the herd and what must be done to reach the greatest end for the greatest numbers of people.

In addition to Kevin's dealings in our state, he has also put Connecticut on a short list of states recognized by The National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) and Families USA. Connecticut is perceived to be a place to seek expert advice and direction in obtaining the passage of legislation that ensures people receive medically necessary care. Kevin was an important resource to Senator Dodd, and worked tirelessly this past summer in developing the Mental Health Parity Law which was successfully passed in Washington.

When the newly appointed Health Care Ombudsman for Washington D.C. wanted advice on how to best focus her resources and operationalize her agency, she elected to spend an entire day in Harford, Connecticut. Specifically, she sought out the counsel of Kevin. I believe her time was well spent.

Finally, I want you to know what it's really like working with Kevin on a daily basis. To begin, I need to say it is unquestionably great fun. We truly look forward to coming to work every day because we can help people in crises get to a better place when they had seen so many doors close and had so many phone calls never returned. Kevin has allowed me the freedom to develop the case work component of OHA, and I am most appreciative of that. At the same time, I know he's right next door if I need him, and his door is always open. For instance, he listened to me when I told him about kids being denied Residential level of care because they didn't have a three day hospital stay prior to entering a residential program. Kevin continued listening as I talked about young adults needing to remain in this level of care, but being denied when they turned eighteen years of age. What is magical about turning eighteen? He not only listened, but he also introduced legislation eliminating these barriers in the next year's legislative session. As you know, legislation doesn't usually pass when it is first brought forward.

Kevin also listened intently as I talked about kids needing physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy, but never receiving this care because they had the diagnosis of Autism. Clearly, I told him, this is discrimination and not acceptable. Clearly he listened, and again worked to see that legislation was introduced and passed on its maiden voyage. This law specifically requires that the thousands of kids with Autism be given the right to services their classmates and friends were already receiving. Take a bow Kevin.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony about a person of good cloth. The State of Connecticut will be well served with the re-appointment of Kevin Lembo as the Health Care Advocate. May it be so.